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The Editors' Page



WHAT SHALL be the foundations of peace and good will within families when, as the title of this number of CHILD STUDY suggests, parents have beaten their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks? Or, put more concretely, with what ideals of conduct should we cultivate relations between the members of a family, when we have abandoned authority and external pressure as primary instruments in child development?

FOR WHETHER we will or no, family relationships are undergoing transformation. A primary characteristic of all life is an interplay of influences between an organism and its surrounding medium; and ways of living follow similar laws. Just as the patriarchal family derived sustenance from an absolute state, so the emancipation of women and children has kept step with the evolution of the democratic ideal and blundering efforts to organize living arrangements in harmony with a growing respect for the individual. Genuine recognition of individuality carries with it an appreciation of differences. Out of the facts of life itself we are coming to realize that today a condition of healthy development is a sensitive organization of one's own plans with reference to others.

IF THIS be true, we have a new basis for discipline. Our aim should be to foster in the child through actual participation in what Dewey calls "shared experiences" an ability to regulate behavior, consciously and unconsciously, with reference to all the interests involved. A parent or a teacher animated by this purpose will seek appropriate occasions to encourage children to pause frequently in the midst of contemplated action, and to survey past performances, in order to trace out their immediate and remote consequences. And this he will do in the hope that children will acquire imaginations which will enable them even when acting with independence and fearlessness of judgment to consider the implications of their actions upon others.

THE DISCIPLINED CHILD, then, in a modern home is one who has learned to create his own patterns of behavior out of relations to his fellows. And to assist children to reach this goal might well become our ideal. That it is difficult to realize we frankly admit. But, as Spinoza long ago remarked, "all things excellent are as difficult as they are rare."

U.S. Thayer

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OCTOBER FORECAST (Healthy Attitudes Toward Health)

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